New Inventions: I Have This Feeling Memory Verse: Psalm 119:105

May 21st, 2023 Scripture Reading: Isaiah 30:15-23

SLIDE 1: TITLE

 Today we are continuing this topic of worldviews. We are trying exploring how to live into and maintain a biblical worldview in the face of a culture that very much disagrees. In the last few weeks we asked, what is truth? Or what ultimately can be trusted? And what is morality? How does our worldview inform us about what is right and wrong? These are very basic questions, but many people do not stop to take the time to put much thought into them. However, the answers we give to these questions will affect and even determine how we live.

 This is why I advocate for a biblical worldview. What the bible presents us is not only true and real but it is going to produce the best results for us as humans living out lives trying to figure out what this universe is all about.

 Today we are going pivot just a little bit and begin talking about the doctrines of our current culture. Now we already know that culture is in a constant state of change. What is in style today will be out tomorrow, but rest assured, it’ll come back eventually. What is true of fashion, is also true of ideas. Good ideas will fall in and out of favor, just the same as bad ones. They are recycled and repackaged…there is nothing new under the sun. However, as Christians, we need to pay attention to and understand what is going on in our culture currently, because the culture we live in is the air we breathe. The culture we live in is the culture we are trying to reach for Jesus. The culture we live in unavoidably does have an effect on us. The ideas of our culture continually pull at us. And, it just so happens, our culture at the moment, is enthralled with some very bad ideas. We are going to highlight some of them, talk about why they are bad and how we respond as people who follow Jesus.

 Some of these bad ideas are summed up in the phrase, “Follow your heart.” Dosen’t that sound nice? Just saying it sounds pretty nice. This is the type of life advice offered up by those who hold sway. Pop star Beyonce put it this way, “I don’t have to prove anything to anyone. I only have to follow my heart…I run my world.” Actor Eric Mabius puts the thought more into the form of a law saying, “You do have to follow your heart, otherwise you’re living a false life.”

**SLIDE 2: Doctrine of our culture #1: Feelings are the ultimate guide.**

This sentiment is really nothing more than sentiment. And that brings us to our first doctrine of culture, our first very bad idea: Feelings are the ultimate guide. To say or believe that feelings are the ultimate guide is a very bad idea, but it sounds so good. And the opportunity to live in such a way presents itself almost at every turn. I like to live according to my feelings because when it comes to my feelings, I am, at least most days, an expert!

**SLIDE 3: I am an expert when it comes to my feelings**

I know what I like, I know what feels good. And it is nice to be an expert on the most important thing in the world.

 But there is a bit of a flaw in this cultural doctrine. Maybe you have picked up on the fact that is just simply is not true. It will not take long before my feelings infringe on the feelings of someone else, and then what? Who is in charge? I cannot go and hurt another person just because I feel angry. I also can’t disagree with someone or tell them they are wrong even if I feel that they are. I can’t label anything as sinful because that would then impede on someone else’s feelings. If you are a person of faith, and you feel conviction about something, or you feel compelled to share that faith, well, you just need to stuff all of those feelings and keep all of that to yourself. What we find then is that the final arbiter is not actually how we feel, but the popular consensus of our culture. That is to say, if your feelings go against the cultural consensus, you will be deemed a heretic. So, the inconsistency of this worldview looms large: at the outset we are told to follow our heart, but quickly find it only counts if those feelings fall within the bounds of cultural approval. But this inconsistency is largely ignored – like most other faults we come across – we tend to look the other way.

**SLIDE 4: Secularism: Self has all authority**

 For lack of a better term, I am going to refer to the worldview of our culture simply as secularism. And this secularism functions out of the main idea that all authority lies within me, the individual. I will determine what is true and good for me. You will determine what is true and good for you. And Christianity? Well, Christianity, as one writer put it, is “a morally offensive weed preventing the growth of a harmonious and beautiful cultural garden.”

 What is so offensive about Jesus? How does he interfere with cultural harmony? Well, again, secularism says that the self has all authority, and Jesus comes along and says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

**SLIDE 5: Christianity: Jesus has all authority**

 This then, is the problem. And the Christian solution to this is simple: Submit to Christ’s authority and put to death your own desires. Christ is King and we obey and serve Him. That is the main thrust of our response to the incredible love of God.

When we live according to our feelings, we are able to maintain a sense of control. I can avoid the things that make me feel bad and enhance the things that make me feel good. I’m in control. The call of Christ, on the other hand, is exactly the opposite. We submit to Jesus, we hand over to him control and let our feelings about it fall where they may. Frankly, Jesus is not all that interested in our happiness, he is interested in our holiness.

**SLIDE 6: Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in my body, I live by faith, indeed, by the faithfulness of God’s son, who loved me and gave himself for me.”**

Paul puts it this way in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in my body, I live by faith, indeed, by the faithfulness of God’s son, who loved me and gave himself for me.” And the wonderful, maybe even unexpected thing is that once we do give up control and surrender our feelings, we will experience a slow but sure transformation. Our hearts and minds will become more like Jesus’ heart and mind which results in a life of joy and peace, all without even consulting our feelings.

Feelings come from within. That’s what it means to follow your heart. Listen to the voice, your voice, that is inside of you. This is the way to a true life. Be true to yourself. Be who you are on the inside. But as one of my favorite songwriters put it in a song called *Perfect Blues,* “if you’re looking for the perfect boy or girl, well, forget baby, we’re all jerks.” If we are all going to obey our inner voice, we are all going to be pretty repugnant and hard to get along with. I know that what is deep down inside of me is not so pleasant.

**SLIDE 7: Isaiah 30:21 , “If you stray to the right or the left, you will hear a voice that comes from behind you saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”**

 Instead, the prophet Isaiah encouraged God’s people in chapter 30 verse 21, “If you stray to the right or the left, you will hear a voice that comes from behind you saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’” Now we tend to take this verse as a reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. We also say that the Holy Spruit lives inside of us, he makes himself at home within us. But when we hear his voice, we still acknowledge that his prompting is not of us…it is something that comes from outside of ourselves. That is the key difference…secularism says listen to **your** inner voice, while the bible encourages us to obey the voice of God’s Holy Spirit that comes from without. These are two different voices that are not always easy to differentiate.

 But living with feelings as our ultimate guide is nice because it’s pretty easy and you get immediate feedback. I know with one bite how I feel about a meal. I know within 10 minutes how I feel about a movie. I know within 2 seconds how I feel about a song. Before too long I have developed a whole database in my head the tells me what I like and do not like. I know right where to turn if my feelings start to drag. Following Jesus is much harder. I have to conform to what he wants. I have to live into his timing. My database is no longer a log of my preferences, it becomes a reflection of what I read in his word. My feelings don’t even play much of a role at all.

**SLIDE 8: Psalm 119:105 “Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey.”**

Psalm 119, a very long an thorough song the extols the majesty and beauty of God’s word. Verse 105 reminds us, “Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey.” It’s a crucial summary statement of our biblical worldview. We live according to the light of God’s word. What that means is that our situation is not really optional. We can live by the light of God’s word, or we can live in the dark. As I have mentioned before, our culture at one time did consider the bible to be our guide, it was an authority that most people acknowledged. Currently, even though the bible is not largely regarded anymore, our culture still gleams with a faint glow. There is enough truth surrounding us that we do not exist in total darkness. Our culture still benefits from the vestiges of a biblical worldview. Even without the bible being prominent, people have some idea of who God is and what he wants of us. Let me give you an example:

 In the ruins of the city of Nineveh an ancient prayer was discovered originating from somewhere around 650 BC. And this prayer reflects a worldview that has absolutely no knowledge of the God of the bible. I will not read the whole thing, but here are some highlights:

 “May the fury of my lord’s heart be quieted toward me;

May the god whom I know or do not know be quieted toward me;

 The sin which I have done, indeed, I do not know;

 The god whom I know or do not know has oppressed me;

 Although I am constantly looking for help, no one takes me by the hand;

 Man is dumb, he knows nothing;

 Mankind, everyone that exists, - what does he know?

 Whether he is committing sins or doing good, he does not even know.

 May your heart, like the heart of a real mother, be quieted toward me

 Like a real mother and a real father may it be quieted toward me.

Can you hear the fear in these words? The paranoia? This prayer reflects the darkness of humans trying to figure out this universe all on their own. They do not have the word of God to guide them. This is their best guess, their shot in the dark. I mean, thinks about praying to a god a may or moay not know and dealing with sin I may or may not know. There is this longing for someone or something to come and take me by the hand…I just need some guidance! I need a mother or father to be kind to me – to be quiet toward me. It breaks my heart a little to think that these folks had to function with no revelation of truth, with no understanding of God our Heavenly Father.

**SLIDE 9: We have access to the light!**

 We are so blessed! We have God’s word at our disposal. We have access to the light! Our fear has been replaced with confidence! Our hesitancy to approach a god we may or may not know is replaced with a permission to speak freely as a son or daughter of the King. Our wonderment at whether or not we have sinned is replaced with commands and laws that specify how we ought to behave and what God expects. God has removed from us the guesswork. How good it is to live in the light of his word! What a relief! What a privilege! What an honor!

**SLIDE 10: God has removed the guess work**

 And it makes sense that the key to living with a biblical worldview is knowing the bible. This need is compounded due to the culture that currently surrounds us. If we are not rooted in the word of God, we will not be able to resist the pull of our own feelings. It’s too enticing…too easy. Lifeway research in an article entitled, “Few Protestant Churchgoers Read the Bible Daily” concluded that bible reading is one of the behavioral characteristics that are most predictive of spiritual maturity. I have mentioned a few times throughout this series that a worldview is ultimately a matter of the heart. How we see the world will affect how we act in it. We all live with some sort of lens, some sort of commitment to assumptions about reality. If we say that our lens is the bible, then we have to know what it says. We have to live what it teaches. We have to wear this thing out. We need to be lifelong students of the Bible.

So I want to encourage you, challenge you to think for a moment about how often you read scripture…maybe it’s once a day, maybe once a week. Write something down there in the frequency spot. But now, we need to talk about quantity. Just like when you diet you count calories, well here we are going to count chapters. Think through your scriptural diet…about how many chapters does that come to per sitting? Just give it your best estimate. Of course not all chapters are the same length, but I really don’t want you to be worried about counting chapters. Here is the challenge: increase your frequency and quantity; just tick it up a notch.

**SLIDE 11: My scriptural diet: tick it up a notch!**

If you read the bible once a week one chapter at a time, then shoot to read the bible twice a week for two chapters at a time. If you read every other day, try missing only one day a week. If you don’t read the bible at all, start! As I have said before, do a quick Google search and find a reading plan that can help you stay on track. And be sure to ask God for his help in the process. His word is so good. It brings clarity, stability…it’s the primary way God speaks to us. Any time that we invest in the word is time well spent. Overall, the goal is simply to read the bible more. If we can do that, we are moving in the right direction as we seek to develop and live into a biblical worldview rather than just letting our feelings be our guide.

Amen.